

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 01298 220745Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P R 220640Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9019

INFO CINCPAC

USSAG

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 1298

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, EAID, CB

SUBJECT: PHNOM PENH'S RESUPPLY PROBLEMS WORSEN

1. THE TWO AMMO BARGES ARE PRESENTLY STOPPED BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE BORDER AND NEAK LOEUNG WHERE ONE OF THE TUGS IS AWAITING ENGINE REPAIR. THE CONVOYS SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATED THROUGH THE NARROWS NORTH OF THE VIETNAMESE BORDER (EXCEPT FOR LOSING TWO SHIELD BARGES), BUT APPARENTLY CREWS AND CAPTAINS OF TUGS REFUSE TO TAKE CONVOY NORTHWARD TO PHNOM PENH AND WISH TO RETURN TO SAIGON. EVEN IF THIS SMALL CONVOY CAN BE PUSHED THROUGH, WE CLEARLY ARE NOW FACING A NEW SERIOUS PROBLEM, THAT OF THE CIVILIAN CREWS REFUSING TO TAKE THE SHIPS UP TO PHNOM PENH.

2. EVEN IF THIS SMALL CONVOY CAN SOMEHOW BE BROUGHT UP TO PHNOM PENH, IT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THAT THE OTHER SHIPS WAITING SOUTH OF THE VIETNAMESE BORDER WILL AGREE TO SAIL TO PHNOM PENH. THEIR MOOD AS I UNDERSTAND IT, IS THAT THEY DO NOT WISH TO RUN THE GAUNTLET.

3. GENERAL, HUNT, DEPUTY COMMANDER OF USSAG, IS IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PHNOM 01298 220745Z

CONSTANT TELEPHONIC CONTACT, BOTH WITH THE CONVOY

DIRECTORS IN SAIGON AS WELL AS WITH EMBASSY SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH. HENCE, IN ADDITION TO THE KHMER MILITARY THREAT, WE HAVE A SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER WHICH MAY UNDERMINE THE MILITARY EFFORTS BEING MADE TO NEUTRALIZE THE KC EFFORTS TO STRANGLE NAVIGATION ON THE MEKONG.

4. IN ORDER TO BREAK THIS PSYCHOLOGICALLY NEGATIVE APPROACH, I SUGGEST THAT EMBASSY SAIGON ASSIST IN ANY WAY IT CAN WITH THE SHIP OWNERS OF THE VESSELS PLYING THE MEKONG TO PHNOM PENH TO ASCERTAIN THAT CAPITANS AND CREWS WILL SAIL, SINCE IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE PHNOM PENH GOVERNMENT.

5. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS TO MAN FUTURE CONVOYS WITH KHMER NAVAL PERSONNEL IN ORDER TO KEEP CONVOYS MOVING UP THE RIVER, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE KC MILITARY POSITIONS ON THE MEKONG CAN BE NEUTRALIZED. WE WILL LOOK INTO THIS POSSIBILITY HERE.

6. IN THE MEANTIME, STOCKS OF RICE, AMMO AND POL ARE BEING DRAWN DOWN. THE BIRD AIR C-130 CONTRACT FLYS 10 AIR LAND MISSIONS INTO PHNOM PENH, KEEPING AMMUNITION AND FUEL LEVELS AT 15-DAY SUPPLY. HOWEVER, RICE STOCKS ARE GOING DOWN AND EITHER CONVOYS WILL BRING UP ADDITIONAL RICE BY RIVER OR IT WILL HAVE TO BE FLOWN IN. SINCE KAF'S OWN AIR TRANSPORT FLEET IS LIMITED, THIS MEANS INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF BIRD AIR TO FLY 20 MISSIONS A DAY AND WOULD PROBABLY ALSO REQUIRE THE US AIR FORCE GOING IN TO THE AIR LANDING BUSINESS AGAIN. THE LATTER ALTERNATIVES ARE BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE POCHENTONG AIRPORT WILL CONTINUE TO BE OPEN TO AIR LANDINGS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY.

7. IN SHORT, WE HAVE A LOT OF PROBLEMS WHICH WILL NEED TO BE RESOLVED QUICKLY IF THE SITUATION IS NOT TO DETERIORATE. I AM CALLING MEETING IN PHNOM PENH WITH GENERAL HUNT AND OTHER CONVOY EXPERTS TOMORROW TO EXPLORE WHAT ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE HERE TO IMPROVE SUPPLY SITUATION.

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 01298 220745Z

DEAN

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## Message Attributes

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